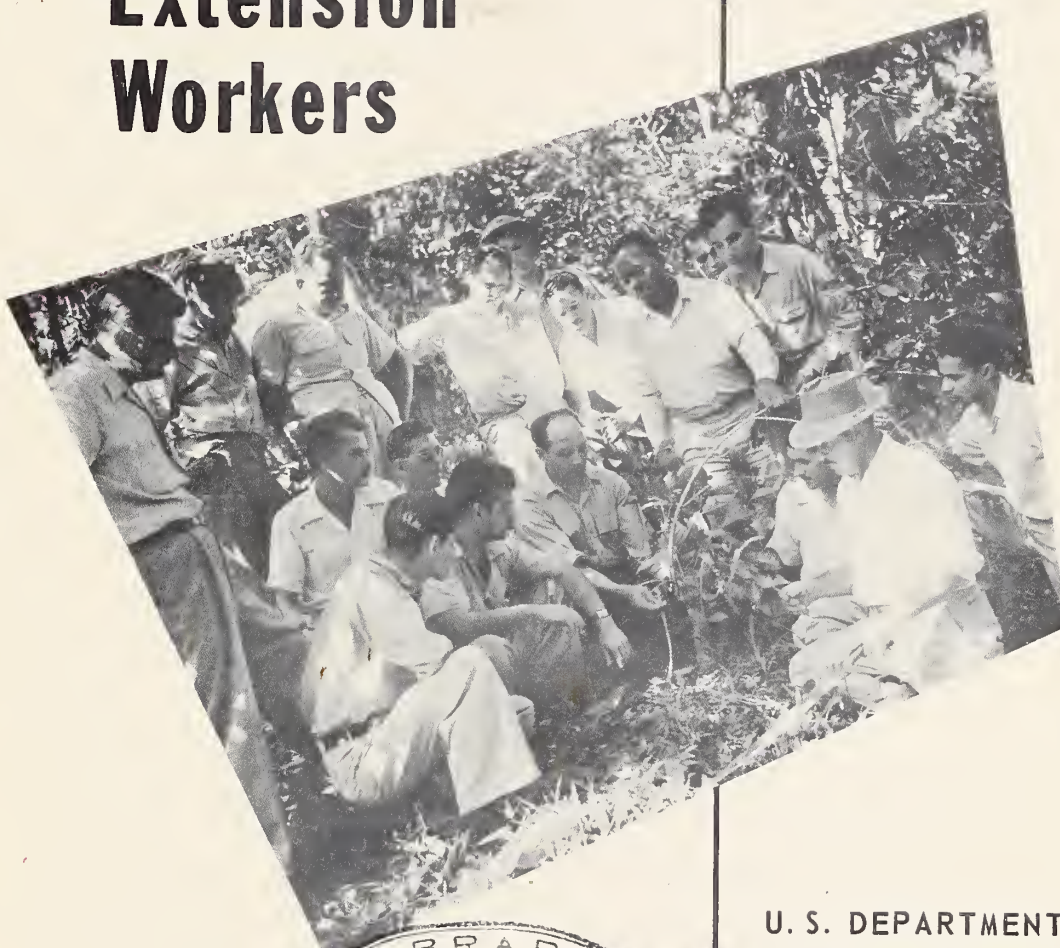


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INSERVICE EDUCATION OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORKERS

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Current thinking of cooperative extension administrators and supervisors emphasizes two major reasons for a strong inservice education program: (1) the removal of deficiencies in preservice and previous inservice preparation and (2) continuance of growth of extension personnel.

1. Removal of deficiencies. At present there are about 13,500 county, State, and Federal cooperative extension workers. The turnover and new workers added each year through program expansion require the training of 1,500 to 2,000 new workers each year. The rate of turnover among extension workers has been unusually high in recent years--as many as one-fourth of the staff are new in some States--and additions to staffs have increased the total number of extension workers by about 1,500 from 1949 to 1954. Some of the turnover was occasioned by wartime dislocations and has been only temporary. Men and women coming back from military service or other work, however, have needed refresher courses, and replacement personnel have needed orientation to extension history and philosophy as well as operational procedures.

Although a bachelor's degree is required for employment, many new extension workers come to the job inadequately prepared to deal with the multiplicity of technical subject fields that are the background of knowledge required of them. The most pressing lack, however, is preparation in the social sciences.

2. Continuance of growth. Extension workers who have been in the field for years find an increasing need to study and read to keep informed of new discoveries, facts, and techniques. The nature of their work as defined in the enabling legislation ^{1/} not only demands a knowledge of current research findings in agriculture and home economics, but calls upon extension workers to keep abreast of new developments in social psychology and human motivation. Through insight into the need for an expanded extension program, extension personnel are aware of their responsibilities to understand more fully the way adults as well as children grow and the interrelationships of economic, physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development.

To maintain the recognition of cooperative extension as a teaching profession, both State and Federal administrators are concerned with the need for professional improvement of workers. As early as 1930, Meredith C. Wilson,

^{1/} The Smith-Lever Act indicates that the extension worker's assignment is to aid "in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same."

Writing about the training of extension workers,^{2/} said:

"Technical training in agriculture or home economics is quite generally accepted as a minimum requirement for all positions in the extension system . . . Practically all extension workers are agreed that technical training should be supplemented by professional training suited to the extension job."

Though 41 institutions have undergraduate courses in extension education, most extension workers acquire their professional training through inservice education. The cooperative nature of extension work requires a flexible inservice education program. A nationwide unity is obtained through the Federal office working with the Land-Grant College Extension Organization and Policy Subcommittee on Extension Personnel Training. Training plan details, however, have to be adjusted to fit the situation and organizational pattern of each State. Institutional policies differ in degree but the aims and overall procedures of the general plan are similar. This variety is a definite strength because of the resources present in the land-grant institutions.

General Plan

Since its appointment in 1946, the subcommittee on extension training has grouped its activities into the following three areas:

1. Preservice - dealing with recruitment and undergraduate education.
2. Inservice - dealing with organized training after employment,^{3/} including induction training and "continuance of growth" education.
3. Professional improvement - dealing with graduate work as differentiated from training received by the worker because he is a member of the Extension Service.

The national committee has been active in forwarding the program in each of these three areas and has made reports and recommendations to the State directors of extension regarding proposals for placing greater emphasis on educational opportunities in each area. Various States have made positive accomplishments toward setting up programs in each of these areas. This statement, however, deals solely with the inservice program after induction.

The groups of extension workers for which an inservice educational program is needed are:

^{2/} Smith, C.B., and Wilson, M.C. The Agricultural Extension System of the United States. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1930.

^{3/} "Training" is the word generally used in the past. "Inservice education" is the term now gaining recognition for that portion following induction.

Administrators.
State leaders - agricultural, home demonstration, and
4-H Club.
Supervisors.
Specialists.
State leaders of studies.
Editors.
Leaders of training & trainer agents.
County agents - workers, agricultural, home demon-
stration, and 4-H Club.
Federal workers.

For almost every group of workers included in the list there has been organized during the recent years some sort of activity or educational experience designed to catch their interest and meet their needs. Some of the activities have been offered on a regional, some on a national basis. For some, expenses have been borne by the State; for others, expenses are the individual's responsibility.

Types of Activity

1. Regional summer schools.

Five extension regional summer schools are held each year. The institutions chosen by the directors in the region for summer school extension courses are Cornell University, University of Wisconsin, Colorado A. and M. College, University of Arkansas, and Prairie View, (Texas) A. and M. College. Regional studies and training committees, appointed by the directors in the region, recommend the courses to be given at each school, the faculty to be employed, and how each school should be financed. Cooperative extension funds can be contributed by those States served in each region to pay nonresident lecturers and consultants. Students each year have included assistant directors, State leaders, supervisors, specialists, and county workers. A survey made in 1951 as a coordinated activity of the professional improvement committees of each of the extension agents' associations showed that about 95 percent of the county workers are of the opinion that these courses are "valuable" or "very valuable."

Almost all States have some representation at the five schools each year. A good many of the States are allowing from \$50 to \$100 on the workers' expenses and are deducting 1 week or less from annual leave time for attendance at these schools. A few scholarships are provided by the Farm Foundation and the Moses Foundation to encourage attendance of supervisors and youth workers. By means of a series of workshops, instructors for the regional schools are receiving special training in curriculum construction and methods of teaching.

2. Workshops.

For the past 15 years, workshops have been a commonly recognized method of inservice education. Since 1944 extension has arranged over 50 workshops, some regional and some national. The majority of these have

been for supervisors and specialists, but editors, State leaders, and directors all have set up special workshops for their groups. Specialists' workshops have been oriented toward several areas; namely, the overall specialist's job, family life education, marketing, health, youth work, housing, or evaluation. Workshops have generally received enthusiastic acceptance. One North Carolina supervisor wrote to her director as follows:

"I heartily believe in workshops. On the job, advanced study for extension workers is limited. Few extension people have professional training suited to their extension jobs; this is particularly true in the supervisory and administrative fields. Then, too, most extension work cannot be taken from the 'book.' Training has to come from actual experience. Thus workshops are the answer. Workshops deal with problems from actual experience. They are concentrated in time and content so that a busy extension worker can manage to be away from his work. I am confident that workshops have excellent and practical possibilities."

A closer look at one or two workshops may be of interest. The fourth national Extension Administrative Workshop was held at Berkeley, Calif., September 12-21, 1951. Eighteen States and Hawaii were represented by 27 directors, associate and assistant directors of extension. The program was arranged to provide the utmost flexibility for discussions, conferences, and work group meetings centering on the theme, Let's Take a Look at a Going Extension Organization. Case studies of the organization of four extension services were prepared in advance for study at the workshop. The four case studies that were presented gave background and indicated problems and methods of attack by the respective State extension services. This gave the group a practical way to apply administrative principles. The consultants included Dr. Rowland Egger of the University of Virginia; Dr. Joseph P. Harris, University of California; Dr. Ralph Tyler, University of Chicago; and Frank Peck, managing director of the Farm Foundation.

In evaluating their workshop experience, the participants mentioned as especially strong points the flexibility of the schedule, excellence of resource people, maximum participation of members, freedom to choose areas of study, and objectivity achieved in discussing the case stories which led to constructive pooling of experience without emotional bias.

For the past few years a series of regional marketing workshops have been held for extension and research personnel. The purpose of these was to explore the work being done by each State and to determine what should be done that is not now being undertaken, how it might be done, who should be involved, and what it would take to do the job.

A workshop for State leaders of home demonstration work, held in 1953, was devoted to a study of new developments in the human relations field. Each year since 1952, there has been held a national workshop on human

development and human relations sponsored by the National 4-H Club Foundation. It has provided each year some 50 extension workers from about 30 States with basic understanding of this important area of study.

Each extension regional or national workshop is developed by a committee with local and national representation. Whenever regional workshops have given State workers experience in participating in this form of inservice education, and a later workshop brings some of the same participants into another similar training experience, those participants have been given some opportunity to put their previous experience to use by discharging some responsibility for the later workshop. Efforts are directed toward the use of good workshop techniques, such as preparation through a problem census, steering committees, outstanding consultants, use of recorders and observers, small group discussions, and ad hoc sessions.

Thus workshops have been a major method in extension inservice education.

3. Outlook Conference.

For about two decades, the Extension Service has benefited from the opportunity to take part in the Annual Outlook Conference held here in Washington. In this conference outstanding research personnel review significant current economic facts affecting agriculture and farm family living and interpret them. For extension workers the Outlook Conference has been a unique educational experience of the highest order. Discussions relate to immediate problems; information is presented firsthand by the authorities in the field; interchange of experience from State to State gives participants an opportunity to make applications on a regional or State basis. Time is allowed for extension workers to consider methods of presenting the information to farm people. Extension specialists whose basic training in economics as applied to farm and family living is inadequate or out of date have gained a liberal education in these annual outlook conferences.

4. Cooperative study leave.

According to records in the Federal Extension office, about 200 extension workers are on graduate study leave each year. This figure seems exceedingly low in terms of the total extension personnel, but, on the other hand, it represents a modest beginning which is significant. There is need of positive action on the part of extension directors and State leaders if this progress is to continue. Extension services in some States have only recently attained sabbatic leave privileges. The prevailing pattern is to permit sabbatic leave with half pay. Some States are even more liberal. In addition, several foundations offer generous scholarships, available especially for extension workers. The sum total of these various sources may provide an income approximating the salary currently received by the individual. Through the assistance of the

National Committee on Boys and Girls 4-H Club Work, six fellowships are provided each year for study at the Department of Agriculture. These are available to men and women extension agents for 10 months' study.

More and more extension administrators are recognizing that those young men and women of ability whom they want to become more effective extension workers should positively be encouraged to do graduate work. As stated by Arthur L. Deering, dean and director of extension, at the University of Maine, "This is a necessary way to maintain effective leadership in educational work." The encouragement of graduate study is an important segment of the overall plan of education for extension workers.

State Inservice Education Programs

The highlights of the general plan for inservice education of extension workers have been set forth. They represent the major effort of the States working cooperatively and on a regional and national basis. In addition to these efforts, and antedating them by many years, are the inservice education (training) programs of the various States for their own personnel. Common methods used by States are:

1. Summer-school courses. These courses are initiated by States and limited to their own personnel. Normally, they are of 3 weeks' duration and serve as refresher courses in subject matter as well as methods. They provide for full-time attendance at college classes designed especially for the needs of extension workers.
2. Committees to study specific problems. The purpose of such work is, in part, to provide extension workers with an opportunity for individual growth while working on common problems. In the past year State committees have worked on perfecting program development policies and plans, evaluation, and problems regarding 4-H reenrollments among older members.
3. Interchange of work responsibilities between agents. A recent study of 4-H Club work indicated that a considerable block of the agent's time was spent in exchanging responsibilities with other agents, the purpose being to strengthen both agents' work. For example, district supervisors often arrange for an agent less proficient in some standard or skill to participate in fair judging, a leader-training meeting, or an achievement day program. In this way he may be able to give a little to the activity, but gain a great number of ideas in exchange.
4. Clinics. Newswriting, radio speaking, and television work are so new that extension agents often have had no training in them during college. Clinics, in which agents practice writing, speaking, and showing, and then see and hear themselves perform, are popular and helpful.

5. Studies. Since its beginning, the Extension Service has used county surveys to determine the extent of adoption of recommended practices by farm people. These and other studies of extension are outstandingly effective methods of inservice education. Agents, as well as State and Federal staff members, participate in such studies as planners, interviewers, and evaluators of results. Study reports serve to acquaint workers in other States with the significant findings of such studies. Twenty-one States and Puerto Rico now have persons assigned to study responsibilities on their State staffs. A number of the States have studies and training committees whose functions are to propose, plan, or pass on study ideas initiated in the State.
6. Field trips to experiment stations. Since the main function of extension workers is to diffuse significant research findings in agriculture and home economics, and to encourage their acceptance, it is imperative that they be kept in touch with current developments in science. Regular and systematic field trips to observe experiments under way at college and Federal stations is a part of the inservice education program in all States.
7. District and State conferences. Annual conferences, like the field trip, are perhaps among the oldest methods most generally used by States. In recent years, with the tremendous growth in size of staffs and diversity of interests, the State conference has been open to question. One problem is adequate meeting facilities for large staffs; another is the lack of commonality of educational needs and interests. Yet the annual conference, with participation in planning, dynamic speakers, vital discussions, flexibility of schedule, and a real extension family spirit, is a valuable means of building morale and broadening mental horizons. District conferences on a more frequent schedule have substituted for the State conference in some instances.
8. Leader-training meetings. The extension specialist's training of local leaders is an excellent vehicle for agent training as well. In the home economics phases special attention has been given to the leader-training meeting as a way of expanding and improving extension work.
9. Professional associations. County extension agents have banded themselves into three professional organizations. The National Association of County Agricultural Agents, the National Association of Home Demonstration Agents, and the National Association of County Club Agents are organized separately yet work cooperatively and assist each other in numerous ways. Each association has a professional improvement committee. These standing committees testify to the fact that through their own efforts agents are seeking to raise the level of their work. Recently, the three professional improvement committees undertook a study of the opinions of county workers regarding the regional summer schools. This study was planned as a joint activity at the request of the Organization and Policy Subcommittee on Extension Personnel Training. On completion of the study the three chairmen of the associations' professional improvement committees met with the Subcommittee on Training to discuss the findings from the study. This experience in itself was an excellent inservice education method for the persons attending the meeting and through them for the membership in the associations.

Educational Principles

This review of the Agricultural Extension inservice education program has touched upon the highlights of current developments. The review cannot be concluded, however, without mentioning the educational principles to which the Service adheres in its inservice education activities. Certain principles underlie the extension way of doing things. These are the same for the work with professionals as for the work with lay people. A brief summary will suffice.

1. Extension education is available to all. Increased effort is being made to put before extension workers a variety of high-quality educational experiences.
2. Participation is voluntary. Farm people participate in extension on a voluntary basis. This makes it necessary to interest and to satisfy, if you are to hold them. The same is true of professional people. Although some States have required their workers to attend summer school at stated intervals, generally, participation for agents in most of the educational programs is voluntary. Voluntary participation necessitates attention to quality and human values. To be effective it is essential for inservice education to begin with the needs and interests of the workers, to meet those interests, and to use them as a springboard for developing further interests.
3. It uses grassroots principles of organization. Planning suggestions are sought from agents and supervisors. Regional groups of State directors set up regional plans. The nationwide program activities are planned by committees of county and State workers with the cooperation of Federal personnel. Plans for national programs are arrived at by discussions and general agreement. Financial support of regional and national activities is likewise cooperative.
4. Extension deals with learn-by-doing, real-life situations. Successful inservice education is through the reconstruction of the experience of the workers. Beginning with their practical problems, with their own experiences, and their customary ways of thinking, extension workers share educational opportunities and through study and discussion devise their own solutions to problem situations. Shared experiences, through informal discussions of problems, according to the agents' study, are among the most prized opportunities of the summer-school sessions. Initiative and acceptance of responsibility are two desirable characteristics fostered by learning-by-doing.
5. The whole family principle is applied. Extension work is for the whole family. Generally speaking, the inservice education program, likewise, is on the whole extension "family" basis. Men and women agents, workers at all levels, have joint educative experiences in schools, workshops, conferences, and clinics. While there are exceptions to this rule, function and problem bases are factors in planning rather than a division on the basis of men's or women's, boys' or girls', phases of work.

6. Goals change with changes in values. At times of emergency in the life of the Nation, the extension program has stressed production and conservation goals, especially of food, feed, and fiber. With the passing of emergencies, however, the trend is towards more longtime planning with farm people on individual family goals. Always the cultural, social, and spiritual goals and values tend to claim their rightful place in the total extension program. Needs for inservice education are revealed in sharp focus as changes in program emphasis occur. Economics, marketing, public policies, citizenship, health education, international understanding, are a few of the areas currently requiring special training programs for agents.

For some time now, the extension way of work has been recognized as a concept of education having great export value. It has become increasingly important, therefore, that the workers see rural life problems in the United States in their proper perspective against the changing order of the entire world. Insight is needed into the unique and common human values among rural people around the world. Inservice education must now prepare extension workers to participate intelligently in the solution of rural life problems on a global basis.

